

# FINISHING TOUCHES

By CHARLES W. PARKER

*Thoughtful Details That Give Distinction to Course's Play*

**F**INESSE. We've been hearing it for some time now and from men highly placed in golfing circles. Finesse in maintenance practices and care of our equipment. There can be no quarrel with this idea and why the value in the little nice ties of maintenance has not found greater recognition before now is somewhat of a mystery.

On otherwise well groomed golf courses we often find the color of the accessories in direct conflict with the landscape. The official colors of a good many clubs would be more in harmony with the background than the white of ball washers, tee markers and grey towels. Where visibility is a requisite of some particular type of accessory, change to a more harmonious color will not necessarily weaken this desired factor. Better the accessories be suppressed and blended into the background than given the common treatment which renders them disturbing highlights.

## Cutting With Art

More finesse has been advocated in the shaping of traps, tees and banks. Unfortunately for most of us these are an inheritance about which we can do very little, although the height at which we cut the grass and the flow of line which we cut between two heights of grass can add or detract from the picture and suppress or accent a structural defect. Particular stress has been laid on fairways. The treatment of abnormalities in terrain through accent cutting, with particular emphasis being laid on changing the fairway outline away from the common harsh straight line from tee to green. It is quite true that nature detests straight lines and equally the bizarre. Will the fairway outlined in a series of scallops appear more beautifully natural to the day-in-and-day-out golfer than the time-honored straight edged one?

We have now brought in another factor of no little importance: The day-in-day-out golfer. How is he going to feel this "aestheticising" of his golf course? Is the "rough crowder" whose pet hook or slice from the tee always lands him just inches in on the fairway going to be satisfied with "for beauty's sake" when he finds his personal landing area now in the

rough? Why is it in the rough? Because after careful study to determine how to break up a harsh straight side line it was decided to cut a beautiful flowing curve and the rough has now run into the fairway a few feet. This is not a far fetched example and turmoil can be stirred up if we do not approach this new maintenance practice carefully. The case histories of a few fairways which came under the writer's care for several years best illustrate this point.

## Some Tales of Trouble

The reason for changes which opened the eyes of all concerned was that not just careful spending but rigid economy was on the way for maintenance costs. As a beginning it was decided to check fairway widths to determine whether any savings could be made in the labor cost of fairway cutting. After observations of play and a careful study of the very detailed plans from which the course had been revamped some ten years previous, it was found that all fairways were being cut too wide, either for their entire length or in part. Each hole was studied and talked over in detail; three fairways ultimately developed serious difficulties.

**Fairway A.** This fairway was a third too wide in its extreme but to narrow it down to a desirable width seemed too abrupt and too arbitrary. Beginning at the tee, which was placed well to left-center, the entire left side of the fairway had a very narrow rough flanked by tall dense trees and out-of-bounds. It may appear that the logical thing to have done was to let the left hand rough run in materially. However the desirable landing place for the tee shot was as close to this side of the fairway as a player's nerve and skill permitted. To have let the left hand rough encroach into the fairway would have been to penalize the skillful golfer. On the right side there was no question that the fairway bulged out far too wide but because of the woods and out-of-bounds on the left the practice of intentionally aiming the tee shot to the right of the center line had become the established practice of the average golfer.

The obvious thing to do was to ruthlessly narrow the fairway in from the

right resulting in a material labor saving and forcing the hole to be played more nearly to its design. To have done this would have been to court the fury of the members as they found what they'd been accustomed to call a satisfactory tee shot lying in the rough. And from here on another factor complicated the problem. About mid-way between the 200 yd. mark and the green several fine trees had been left to jut out from the right side of the fairway in perfectly good design under the conditions and excellent finesse. From the center line or left center these trees presented no hazard, but were increasingly difficult of negotiation the farther the ball was laid to the right of center. Remember, please, this condition had existed for years; the golfers were accustomed to the tree hazard but they were also accustomed to having a good fairway lie to help them get off a shot over or around those trees. Maintenance practices, design and the encouragement of reasonably accurate play all said let the rough grow in to twice its existing width but common sense said "No" and this problem was solved by letting the fairway stay practically the width it had been for years even though costly maintenance and sloppy play were encouraged.

#### Loud Groans from the Gals

Fairway B. This hole will always be in controversy but our problem was limited to the first 300 yds. of fairway. On flat terrain with very few trees to break up the monotony, the architect had tried to add character by over-generous use of traps between paralleling fairways. The left hand side had not been maintained to the design and presented the typical harsh straight line for most of its length, though the architect's plan called for a bulging in of the rough just short of the 200 yd. mark. The left side line was designed in two curves, from the beginning of the fairway to the tip of the bulge and from this tip onward widening the fairway at 200 yds. and back to tie into other features of the terrain which need not be considered here. It was interesting and amusing to get the story of this hole from the "oldest member" and, though this left hand edge was a very minor thing to his mind, its radical change with each new Chairman was remarkable and at no time had it ever conformed to the original design.

The architect's idea seemed reasonable and supported worthwhile savings in labor hours, so once again the left hand edge

was changed and we went on to the next problem. Alas and alack; from a small but vehement group, the lady golfers, came a protest that could not be denied. We had not considered them at all. A couple of years before we had built the ladies a forward tee and the acclaim with which it had been received was still ringing sweetly in our ears. This forward tee put the architect's bulge within reach of a good tee shot. The ladies were right and we were wrong and the left hand edge was again changed. Once more we lost some labor savings and finesse was given a black eye.

#### Squawks Change With Seasons

Hole C. Having been stamped the best golf hole on the course by a nationally prominent golfer, C did not receive the criticism that it really deserved because of the exacting terrain around the 200 yd. mark. Actually there was only a relatively small landing area to place a tee shot on to have a flat lie with an opportunity to go for the green. From 125 yds. to 250 yds. the fairway was bumpy with a slope varying from gentle to abrupt running from left to right. Around the 200 yd. mark on the extreme right was a level spot at the bottom of the sharpest part of this slope.

Many shots were played to run or kick into this hollow for while the shot to the green was blind the lie was good and the golfers knew that they could tie into their second shot with the assurance of being just on the green or so close to it they could go for the pin on their approach. In the Spring little was heard about the rough on the right side of this fairway but as the ground dried and roll or kick increased the ball would run through the flat bottom area into the rough. Back would be cut this rough, ten or twelve feet in the extreme and all would be well for awhile.

Comes the Fall, a tight match in a fussy foursome with a round house slice landing in the nicely cut back rough. The 19th hole echoes and re-echoes with remarks on the dumbness of "those fellows who cut the grass" and the next day's orders will be to, "Let that rough grow in this Fall." For several years through the varying seasons that rough line has ebbed and flowed like the tide and probably always will.

These case histories are not to be considered original contributions. Every greenkeeper and green-chairman is running into similar problems all of the time.

There is, however, a definite analogy between them and "finesse".

This finesse is a worthwhile thing, though its value will never be appreciated universally for it is not given to all of us to understand such refinement. For those who observe and can appreciate it, there will be just as many who cannot see because of their "blind spot" but who will nevertheless understand even though unable to express why some particular hole or course is more pleasing to play than others. This is true only because of the finesse in maintenance. Of course there will be some who never can "see the light." To them a golf hole is a tee, a fairway, some traps (never ought to be there anyway) and a green, with high grass all around. They are not golfers but "exercisers" and gamblers.

Do not get completely carried away with an idea. In our search for ways and means of instituting more economical maintenance practices we were justified in making many more or less radical moves, if we considered the maintenance factor only. When all factors were considered common sense applied the brakes and we looked elsewhere for our economies. In another case we overlooked one factor entirely and paid the resulting penalty. In still another case no rule, rhyme or reason applied but an abnormality existed and had to be borne with.

All these factors and more will be found when finesse is studied seriously and sincerely. Make haste slowly and consider; finesse is more apt to be obtained through improvement in minor practices than by magnificent attempts at sweeping changes in the landscape.

## BUDGETING HUNCH

**Extending Memberships to Spring  
Reduces Resignations. Wants  
9-Hole Ideas**

By LOUIS FRANK ROSENBERG  
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ONE thing I'd like to see in GOLFDOM is more exchange of information between nine-hole club officials. For size the larger club problems may be very important but for intensity the problems of the nine-hole clubs are just as acute. Later I'll relate an idea that probably will help both nine- and 18-hole clubs with their resignation and budgeting problems.

As an ardent reader of GOLFDOM for many years, and admitting and confessing

that many operating plans now in effect at our Club were taken from articles appearing in the "Business Journal of Golf" I feel that the time has arrived for us who are associated with smaller organizations to relate in detail through this publication a few of the policies that have met with success, together with problems still unfathomed. As in industry, a small operator confronted with certain obstacles is unable to overcome them in the same manner as the big fellow.

The writer feels justified in appealing through GOLFDOM for necessary constructive information relative to the operation of Clubs with nine-hole courses, for in the past over a period of ten years approximately 95% of the articles written have reference to large clubs with eighteen or more holes which usually have big memberships, thereby showing a greater earned income toward their budget for use in operating costs.

Should any of GOLFDOM's readers recall my Pay-as-you-Play plan pertaining to the collection of dues over a six months period it may be well worth mentioning that many clubs who adopted the idea are now operating more successfully.

We who are honored with title of office and are supposed to direct the destiny of our clubs through thick and thin oftentimes overlook the fact that many good suggestions relative to club interests come from members who do not sit in the Board Room. For illustration, the following thought was passed on to the writer and it may be worth consideration by some of the large as well as the smaller clubs.

Our fiscal year ends Dec. 31st. The annual meeting is held in January for the election of officers. Reports pro and con for the ensuing year are read and discussed by the handful of members who usually appear. But as far as knowing our financial condition it is mere guess work on the part of the treasurer as resignations always came in during January and February.

Acting upon the suggestion made by our good member, the Board of Governors approved the plan of extending 1934 memberships to March 31, 1935. Members were so notified with the results as follows; no resignations received up to date simply because a man is not interested in paying golf dues during the winter months any more than he would buy ice skates in summer, and when the season gets under way we'll find his name still on the membership roll.